

To: Committee on Human Services

From Margaret M. McEvoy  
218 Airline Road  
Clinton, CT 06413

Date: March 12, 2008

Re: Testimony – House Bill #5666

Thank you for allowing me to speak in favor of House Bill #5666, which would expand the State of Connecticut Pilot Program for adults on the autism spectrum who are not mentally challenged. I am the mother of a 24-year-old young woman named Shannon who is diagnosed with high-functioning autism.

Shannon was accepted into the Pilot Program in June 2007 and started receiving services in August of last year. Since she graduated from high school in 2002 until 2007, her needs were not being met. The only program she qualified for was with The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services who helped her get a part-time job the summer after high school graduation. During this time, she obtained an Associate Degree in General Studies from Gateway Community College, attending part time.

The Pilot Program has been a lifeline for Shannon and our family. She is attending a social skills group once a week where participants work on real life situations they encounter and most importantly, how to act appropriately. My husband and I have attended a parents group where we get expert advice from a psychologist on how to parent our adult child on the autism spectrum.

Shannon also is working with a mentor/life-skills coach. They meet 2-3 times weekly. Her mentor has helped her with organizational skills, laundry, cooking and budgeting her money.

They also do social activities such as going out to eat, seeing movies and are planning a trip to New York City.

As for her employment picture, she has been working with BRS, as in the past. However, the person she is working with now is only working with pilot program participants, so Shannon is getting a lot more attention. Since her counselor has her past job experiences from BRS, that has helped to plan for the future. They have gone over Shannon's interests and strengths, along with her weaknesses. Her counselor helped Shannon prepare a presentation at the Clinton Library last month entitled, "Presidents and Their Pets". She did a great job in front of a small audience. Also, Shannon is volunteering at Fowler Nursing Center three afternoons per week. This may lead to a career in Therapeutic Recreation.

Workshops have been sponsored by Department of Developmental Services, Division of Autism Spectrum Services and CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center on subjects such as "How to Stay Safe", "Self Advocacy Training", and "Sexuality Training".

My daughter still is a long way to becoming independent, but she has made great strides in nine short months. It is so important that all the services she is receiving are coordinated under the umbrella of the DDS. I can call one person, her coordinator, and get answers.

Please vote to expand funding for the pilot program to be implemented statewide. There are many more folks on the autism spectrum throughout Connecticut who could benefit from these services.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret M. McEvoy